

ABŪ MUḤAMMAD AḤMAD B. AṬḤAM AL-KUFĪ'S
KĪTĀB AL-FUTŪḤ AND ITS IMPORTANCE CON-
CERNING THE ARAB CONQUEST IN CENTRAL
ASIA AND THE KHAZARS*

It is a well-known fact that the Libraries of Istanbul contain various important manuscripts; most of them are known through descriptive catalogues and publications; but there are still many "undiscovered" manuscripts, and from time to time unexpected "discoveries" are made and very valuable works found. "The Commission", which has been busy many years with the classification of the manuscripts and the preparation of the Catalogues of Libraries at Istanbul, has published the Catalogues of the Turkish historical manuscripts; since the Catalogues of Arabic and Persian manuscripts on the same subject are in preparation, and still not published, I regret not to be able to give much information about them; but we have good reason to expect that we will encounter the titles of many manuscripts, besides those catalogued in Tauer. We have the full right to expect many, still unknown, new manuscripts, when the Catalogues of all Arabic and Persian MSS are published. An example of the recently discovered manuscripts is the Original of the Arabic work of Ibn Aṭḥam al-Kūfī, the *Kitāb al-Futūḥ*, known till now only through the Persian translation.

The work of Abū Muḥammad b. Aṭḥam al-Kūfī, in the Persian translation of Maḥammad al-Mustavfī al-Haravī, is preserved in several manuscripts and there is a lithographic edition of it; we are acquainted through them with the contents and peculiarities of *Kitāb al-Futūḥ*; but it was impossible to come to a definite judgement of its value as a historical source without having the Arabic original. The known Arab historians did not mention his name at all, and no other references could be found to his life. From the fact that the Arab writers ignored the existence of Ibn Aṭḥam al-Kūfī, the suspicion of his work's value was increased.

From the Persian translation we see clearly the Shi'i tendencies of its author, and it is quite possible that writers with Sunni convictions refused to take notice of the existence of *Kitāb al-Futūḥ* and its author; the other cause could be the rarity of his work. Abū Muḥammad

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Aḥmad b. Aṯtham al-Kūfī in spite of being contemporary with the great Arabic historians of III. century A. H., like Ṭabari, Balāzurī and Yaḳūbī, did not come into the same category and his name fell into oblivion, until the end of the VI. century of Hiġra.

The name of Ibn Aṯtham al-Kūfī seems to be mentioned for the first time by Abū Naṣr Aḥmad b. Aḥmad b. Naṣr al-Buḥarī in his work *Tağ al-Kiṣaṣ*, composed in 477 A. H., but Ibn Aṯtham came to full recognition only after the translation of his book into Persian. The translation was made by Muḥammad bin Aḥmad al-Mustavfī al-Haravī in the year 596 A. H. (1199), through the encouragement of one of the highest dignitaries of "Khwarizm and Khorasan" and finished as is evident from the manuscript in the Bodleian Libray by Muḥammad bin Aḥmad bin ʿAlī Bakır al-Kātib al-Mabarnābādī. Muḥammad al-Mustavfī gives in an introduction some account of his translation, the name of the author and the quality of *Kitāb al-Futūḥ*; but there is no account of the life of Ibn Aṯtham al-Kūfī, nor the name of the "high" patron, who urged him to make the translatoin; he is called only by his "alqabs". Kazem-bek, basing his statement on one manuscript in the Petersburg Library, claims that the person in question was the Khwarizmshah Muḥammad; I am not able either to affirm or to deny this statement. Thanks to this translation, Ibn Aṯtham was rescued from oblivion but even after this, *Kitāb al-Futūḥ* did not have a large circulation: we find his name mentioned only by the authors of the X.th century A.H., as by Khwandemir, who quoted him in the Persian translation in his famous book *Habīb al-Siyar*; afterwards in *Nigāristān*, where Ibn Aṯtham al-Kūfī's book comes as a second source, after Ṭabari (also in a Persian translation). At last comes Khaġi Khalifa's *Kaṣf al-Žunūn*, where the name of Ibn Aṯtham al-Kūfī is not given correctly (Muḥammad bin ʿAli), but we have some grounds for believing that Khaġi Khalifa had seen the Arabic Original, now discovered in Topkapu Serail.

The European scholars learned of the *Kitāb al-Futūḥ* also through the Persian translation of al-Mustavfī. If I am right, his name is first mentioned in the *Oriental Collections* published by Ouseley, where in Vol. I. (1798) three extracts in Persian were published with English translations; Ouseley described the *Kitāb al-Futūḥ* as "a valuable work" and drew the attention of Orientalists to this source. Fraehn, in his *Indications bibliographiques* (published in 1845) gave its title, and the date of Ibn Aṯtham's death was shown as the year 314 (?) A. H. In spite of Fraehn's *Indications* a long time passed before any trace of the Arabic original could be found.

It was only in 1881, when Pertsch published the Catalogues of Arabic manuscripts in the Gotha Library, that a description by him

appeared of an Arabic manuscript (No. 1592) parts of which fully corresponded with the Persian extract in the *Oriental Collections*. Since the name of Ibn A'tham al-Kūfī was written in a very doubtful form, Pertsch was not quite certain that this was the Arabic original of *Kitāb al-Futūḥ*, and that is why he made the following statement: Ob die vorliegende arabische Redaction das Original der Persischen Bearbeitung, oder eine Rückübersetzung der letzteren in das Arabische ist, muss ich dahingestellt sein lassen (Band III, 219). The Gotha MS has 192 leaves and contains the stories of the first three Caliphs, Abū-bakr, Omar and Othmān; it has also at the end a notice, that the reign of 'Alī will be continued in the second volume. Since the al-Mustavfī's translation goes on until the martyrdom of Ḥusain b. 'Alī at Karbalā (in 60 A. H.) it was evident *Kitāb al-Futūḥ* has been continued, and that the Gotha MS was only the first part of the whole work. Indeed we are now in a position to confirm this assumption. The Arabic original, found many years ago in Istanbul in the Library of the Topkapu Serail, can be considered as the continuation of the Gotha MS and contains the period of 'Alī's Caliphate.

We possess no sufficient data, in the special literature, concerning the life of Ibn A'tham al-Kūfī; what has been said in Brockelmann's *Geschichte der Arabischen Literatur* (Supplement Band I, 200) or in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (II, 364), or in Browne's *History of Persian Literature* (I, 363) as well as in Storey's *Persian Literature* (Section II, Fasc. I, 207-09) is based only on the information given in printed catalogues (Rieu, Pertsch, Ethé etc) and is now obsolete. Brown wrote in 1929 as follows: "The historian al-A'tham al-Kūfī whose History of the Early Caliphs is remarkable for its strong Shi'ite bias, and is only known to us through its much later Persian translation.....". In Storey's very useful book are listed all the known manuscripts of the Persian translation of *Kitāb al-Futūḥ* and the extracts from it (not mentioned in an extract in "Derbendnamah," by Kāzembek). The Arabic original, as far as I know, has been used only by Zeki Validi, who published some extracts from it (In *Ibn Fadlan's Reisebericht*).

The *Kitāb al-Futūḥ* in Topkapu Serail is preserved in the Ahmed III. Library, No. 2956, in two volumes; written in large Naskh on coarse paper: the sub-titles are in red; the manuscripts are bound and very well preserved. On the first page is the title of the work, the name of the author, and some notes concerning the ownership. At the end of the second volume is the name of the copyist and the date (15 Reb. I. 873 — 30 Oct. 1468). I suppose Khaḡi Khalifa's confusion over the name of Ibn A'tham al-Kūfī comes from the fact that he saw this Arabic original but put the name of the copyist. Since the oldest Persian version of *Kitāb al-Futūḥ* dates from the year 977 A. H. (see Storey II, 208) the Arabic original in Topkapu Serail is more than a

hundred years older. Consequently through it the value of the work increases even more.

The first volume of *Kitāb al-Futūḥ* contains 267 leaves, begins with the narration of Othman's last years, and continues until the end of Mamun's Caliphate. The second volume of 273 leaves extends from Mamun's reign until the suppression of Babek's revolt by Afshin, and his execution (223 A. H. 838), and ends with a very short relation of the death of Musta'in (252 A. H. 866).

The comparison of *Kitāb al-Futūḥ* with the other classical sources of Arabic history is a subject in itself. I limit myself here to general observations and should like to go on to my special subject. As I mentioned on the first page there is the title of the book and the name of the author. The beginning of the text is worthy of note because of the mention of the narrators, and through them we have some clue to the time at which the author lived, and the manner of his composition.

The names of the persons mentioned can be found in Ṭabarī's *Annals* and in other contemporary authors, but many of them I was not able to find. I suppose that al-Vāqidi is the same famous literary person, who lived in the III. century, and from this note we can conclude that Ibn A'tham was his contemporary and met him. This is the *tempores post quem* date for Ibn A'tham's time. As regards the *tempores ante quem* we can surmise as follows: If Bal'amī used the *Kitāb al-Futūḥ*, then, since Bal'mī's book was composed in 352 A. H., Ibn A'tham must have lived before this date. Abū Naṣr al-Buḥarī mentions him in *Tag̃ al-Ḳiṣaṣ* (written in 475 A. H.); and we have other evidence that Ibn A'tham belongs to a quite early period of Arabic historians. Fraehn in his *Indications* (p. 16) gives the date of his death as 314 A. H., which was repeated by Brockelmann and Storey; but we possess no direct information about it. Since the last part of his *History* goes on until the death of Mus'tain (252 A. H.) it is probable that Ibn A'tham was alive at this time. Our conclusion can be as follows: Ibn A'tham was an author contemporary with the great historians like Ṭabarī, Balāzurī and Ya'qūbī, and consequently belongs to the same circle, although his work differs in many ways from the famous *Annals* of Ṭabarī, or the books of Balāzurī and Ya'qūbī.

We mentioned some special opinions concerning the originality of the Arabic MS in the Library of Gotha. I think the MS in Topkapu Serail gives us a satisfactory answer; we can now confidently believe in the originality of the Gotha MS; and some comparison of the Arabic original in Topkapu Serail and the Persian translation can be helpful for this purpose.

In spite of the comparative length of the Persian text, we can easily see that the Arabic was the basic text; especially if we remember that Ibn A'tham in the Arabic original (at Topkapu Serail) quotes the names of his informants, which are not to be found in the Persian translation; so we have to affirm the originality of the MS in Gotha, and consequently the suspicion of Pertsch need no longer exist.

After the discovery of the Arabic original of *Kitāb al-Futūḥ* we come to the question of the relationship between the works of Ibn A'tham and Bal'amī. The various parts of Bal'amī's *History* did not overlap with Ṭabarī but correspond with *Kitāb al Futūḥ*. The Turkish translation of Bal'amī, best known as *The Ṭabarī's Translation* has a close resemblance to the Arabic text of Ibn A'tham. So we are again entitled to consider the book of Bal'amī not as a simple adaptation of Ṭabarī's *Annals* but as genuine composition, enlarged with material from new sources, perhaps even from *Kitāb al-Futūḥ* or from some common source, not known to us. Since there are various versions of Bal'amī's work, some of them short some long, we have not available the original text of Bal'amī; consequently I suppose it would be of great importance to study the whole question again. From the other side, we see many narratives in *Derbendnāmah* corresponding to *Kitāb al-Futūḥ* and we have again to search for the sources of *Derbendnāmah*. The relationship of *Kitāb al-Futūḥ* to the well-known historical sources of the III. and IV. centuries is of the greatest interest.

The most significant parts of the *Kitāb al-Futūḥ* are the stories concerning the "Arab conquests in Central Asia". We have on this subject an excellent study by H. A. R. Gibb, who with the help of all the accessible material, came to some remarkable conclusions. Gibb was familiar with the contents of *K. F.*, which are similar to those of Zottenberg's translation of Bal'amī, which he (Gibb) had used. There are some particulars in Ibn A'tham's work, not related elsewhere. The sections about the military expedition of Ḳutaiba bin Muslim to Khwarizm and Samarkand are nearly the same; but with some more detail in *Kitāb al-Futūḥ*, which gives the impression of being the basic text. For instance the whole story of Gurak, the Soghdian ruler of Samarkand, his struggle against Ḳutaiba, the siege of Samarkand by the Arabs and the armistice, and the copy of the commitment given by Ḳutaiba to Gurak, are of particular importance. Bal'amī (in Zottenberg's translation and *The Turkish Ṭabarī*) also narrates all these events in great detail, but *Kitāb al-Futūḥ* has the stronger claim to be the earlier source; we see this, especially, if we take the Ḳutaiba bin Muslim's "Commitment,".

Ibn A'tham gives the fully copy of it, and it corresponds in form as well as in content with the similar diplomatic documents of this period.

I suppose we have here to do with the oldest diplomatic document, concerning Turkestan and the Arabs; I do not remember the existence of the commitments made in earlier years by the Arab conquerors to the rulers of Paykand, Bukhara or Khwarizm. But one point in this document causes trouble: its date. Though Ṭabarī, Balʿamī (Zottenberg's translation) and afterwards Ibn al-Athīr, put the conquest of Samarkand by Ḳutaiba bin Muslim, and the conclusion of peace between Ḳutaiba and Gurak in the year 93 A. H., in this "Commitment," the date is 94 A. H. Since this "document," in *Kitāb al-Futūḥ*, can be considered the full and true account of this event, and since all the reports on this campaign can be regarded as a trustworthy account, we have no reason to doubt the correctness of this date; especially when Yaʿqūbī also gives the same date, 94 A. H. In the years previous to the last war, the Russian archaeologists discovered some Soghdian material, belonging to the time of Tarkhun and Gurak; even an Arabic document, described as the oldest one found in Turkestan (dated 718 A. D.) has been published by Kračkovski in *Sogdijskij Sbornik*. It is possible that some more material may be discovered, perhaps the Arabic original of this Commitment of Ḳutaiba bin Muslim, or its translation into Soghdian; then we should be able to judge with more certainty about the reliability of Ibn Aʿtham's reports, and we could check this "Commitment," with its original.

There are in *Kitāb al-Futūḥ* many interesting notes on the Turkish elements in Sīgistan and the north parts of Djayhun at the time of the Arab conquest in Central Asia. I think the similar accounts in Ṭabarī's work and in the other sources deserve to be reviewed and scrutinized again; and then only can we get a clear idea of the rôle played by the Turkish tribes in the region of North-East Khorasan and in Maveraannah at this period. I suppose, if we take into consideration the reports given by Ibn Aʿtham on this subject, that the activity of Turkish elements in these regions was on a larger scale than is commonly accepted; consequently *Kitāb al-Futūḥ* can be considered as a valuable source for students of Turkish History too.

One of the most interesting parts in *Kitāb al-Futūḥ* is the description of the Khazar-Arab wars which is given in the following divisions: The invasion by Djarrāḥ bin ʿAbdullah al-Hakamī of the region of Armenia and what happened to him in the country of the Khazars; Djarrāḥ's war against the Khazars; the affairs of Saʿīd bin Amr al-Kharashī and his campaign in the land of the Khazars; the rule of Maslama bin ʿAbdalmalik and dismissal of Saʿīd bin al-Kaharashī; the story of the marriage of Yazīd bin Usayid with the daughter of Kagan of the Khazars; the report on the breach of peace by the Khazaras after the death of the "Khatun,"; the rule of Saʿīd

bin Muslim over the countries of Armenia and what happened to Moslems during his government. All the narratives mentioned above, with few exceptions, are to be found in Bal'ami's work (Zottenberg's translation) and the Turkish text; but in Ṭabari's work, as well as in Balāzuri and Y'akūbī, they are given in a very short form; only Ibn al-Athir gives more detailed accounts. In *Kitāb al-Futūḥ* we found some details not reported in other sources. One of these is a part of Djarrāḥ's campaign, in 104 A. H. For instance when Djarrāḥ's army was defeated by the Khazars and Djarrāḥ himself captured and beheaded, few of the Moslem soldiers could escape; and one of them was a man bearing the name "Sakaliba,, , i. e. the "Slav,, , who brought the news of this sad event to Caliph Hisham; from this notice we see that a number of Slavonic soldiers were in the Moslem army. In the same chapter we read about an incursion of Arabs into the country of "Sakalibe,, , i. e. Slavs, after having plundered the region near Samandar; this fact is mentioned also by Bal'ami and in the Turkish translation of Tabari. These notices again give us cause to reconsider the meaning of this term, "Sakalibe,, , in the Arabic sources. Is the "Saklab,, , in *Kitāb al-Futūḥ* the region of Slavs-Rus in Tmutarakan (Tamatarkha)? Or, as Zeki Velidi suggests, was the "Sakalib,, , the name of the whole country and all the peoples on the lower Don and Volga? I personally do not agree with his arguments, advanced in the *Ibn Fadlan's Reisebericht*.

In connection with the Arab campaign against the Khazars in the year 104 A. H., in nearly all the sources we meet the "Son of Kagan,, , who commanded the Khazars during their incursion into Azar-bajdjan. Some of them give his name; in Zottenberg's translation he is called "Barkhebek,, , in the Turkish translation (British Mus.) Barcenk and (in the Cairo edition) Narcil; in "Derbendnamah,,s notice "Pashenk,, , in which name Kazembek would like to see the title of "Pasha,, ,; Ibn al-A'tham mentions him several times and his name is given in various forms, but with the same basis; the diacritical signs not having been put in the same way each time, it is difficult to find the right form, but in one context there is found the form "Barsbik,, , which gives, I suppose, the right solution. In the *Armenian History* of Ghevond, in connection with the events of this time, we meet the name of the widow of the Kagan of Khazars, written as "Parsbit,, , which could be read as well as "Parsbik,, ,. It is evident that this name corresponds quite easily with our "Barsbik,, , (بارسيك); and since the Turks' female and male names could be the same, the name of the son of Kagan, here reported, was "Parsbik,, , or "Barsbik,, , a common Turkish name, connected with "Pars,, , the "leopard,, ,; we have another name in this category, the first is—if the relation is authentic - "Bulan,, , Kagan in the correspondence of Hasdai Ibn Shaprut with Kagan Josef ("Bulan,, , - deer, (Rotwild);

this fact can be taken into consideration for research into Khazar proper names. Ibn A'tham gives once more the name of the Khazar Kagan, who accepted the Moslem religion, in the form *ساطر* without diacritical signs; I am not able to say what it means.

During the campaign of Sa'īd bin 'Amr al-Kharashī, we read a romantic story about the rider, Yezdek, on the "bay horse,, and again of the mysterious man on the "white horse,, who three times gave his services to the Arab commander without any reward. In Bal'amī, *Derbendnamah* and Ibn al-Athīr - both horsemen are mentioned, but *Kitāb al-Futūh* contains the most detailed version of this story.

The report on the Kavthar bin Asvad al-'Anberī's incursion into the land of the Khazars and his taking by surprise of the Hazar Tarkhan (this passage has been published by Zeki Validi in *Ibn Fadlan's Reisebericht*) is not to be found in other sources; although the name of Hazar Tarkhan occurs in Bal'amī (Zottenberg's translation, Turkish text), we have here a very interesting and vivid description of this event, which gives the impression of being narrated by an eyewitness.

The story about the marriage of Yazīd bin Usayid, the governor of Azarbaijdjan during the first years of Abū Ca'far al-Manṣūr, with the Khazar Princess, is given in its full form, which is not to be found in Bal'amī. The arrival of the Princess, who is called "Khatun,, and her escort-train are described in detail, so we have here again a very vivid picture of this event. The marriage was a political one and aimed at the preservation of good relations between the Caliphate and the Kaganate of the Khazars. But the "Khatun,, lived only two years, and her death was attributed by the Khazars to poisoning, and resulted in a revenge incursion into Azarbaijdjan and Armenia. "The Khatun" s marriage, as well as the Khazar attack after her death, is related by Ghevond, whose account corresponds exactly to the reports of Ibn A'tham. These few examples from the *Kitāb al-Futūh* show us the reliability of his narratives, and entitle us to consider it a quite sound historical source concerning Khazar-Arab relations.

Among the important features of *Kitāb al-Futūh* are the quotations about the place and river names of Kaukasus; of especial interest are the places near Bāb al-Abvāb, and the country of the Khazar. Many places mentioned in Bal'amī, Ṭabarī and the Arab geographers, and in *Hudūd al-'Ālam* are to be found in *Kitāb al-Futūh*; but one trouble is that the diacritical signs are either omitted or put in inaccurately, so that we have difficulty in finding a correct reading; with the help of existing and known material and the place names in Kaukasus, I think it is not difficult to verify the names of places. From the march routes of Arab generals we are able to follow the directions of Arab incursions, and some of them give us reason to reconsider

the conclusions concerning some of the Khazar towns. It seems that "Yargu," (Tarki) and "Samandar," are not the same places that they have been generally agreed to be. This comes from the route given in connection with the campaign of Djarrāḥ bin 'Abdullaḥ al-Ḥakamī, in the year 104 A. H., which is: Bāb al-Abvāb - River al-Rān - the fortress Haṣayin - Yargū (Tarki) - Balancar - Vanandar - Samandar - the mountain الكل - the district Shakī. Bal'amī gives nearly the same route, but does not mention Vnndr; Ibn al-Athīr gives the last name in the form Vbndr, but it is evident that he means Vanandar.

We are happy to notice that researches connected with the Khazars are again very active. The new edition of the so-called "Khazar correspondence," by Kokovtsev, the studies of Brutzkus, Nemeth, Moşin, Gregoire, Zeki Validi Togan, Minorsky, and specially Zajaczkowski, Artamonov and Arne, and an excellent bibliography on the Khazars, published in the "Bulletin of the New York Public Library," all indicate the growing interest in Khazar studies. Many questions about their origin, their language, their early conversion to Islam, and the names of places—are not solved definitely, in spite of Marquart's wide and profound researches. I hope that the *Kitāb al-Futūḥ* will add some useful contributions to Khazar studies.

In this short communcation, I have attempted to show that the work of Ibn Aṭṭham al-Kūfī can no longer be considered as only "a popular and romantic history," of early Arab conquests. Although it is composed in quite a different manner from Ṭabari's *Annals*, or Ibn al-Athir's work, it contains many valuable materials concerning the early period of Islamic and Turkish history. Consequently *Kitāb al-Futūḥ* can be rightly placed among the important historians of the III. and IV. centuries A. H. It is possible that Ibn Aṭṭham had seen or heard the full version of the so-called "Bahili tradition," of the Conquest in Central Asia, as well as a full, and unknown, account of the wars against the Khazars; perhaps they were the common sources of *Kitāb al-Futūḥ*, Bal'amī's work, and the *Derbendnāmah*.